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THE MONTHLY GULL BULLETIN

AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

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MAY MEETING: The next regular meeting of the Association will be held on Thursday evening, 10th inst., at eight o'clock, in the Assembly Hall of the Public Library, corner of McAllister and Larkin Streets. Take elevator to third floor. Car lines No. 5 or No. 19.

We are again to have the pleasure of greeting our former Honorary President, Mr. Harry S. Swarth, who will tell us of the experiences of "A Naturalist on San Francisco Mountain," the scene of his latest ornithological work in Arizona. There is no one more competent to speak authoritatively on this subject, and the lecture will be one which no member can afford to miss. Visitors will be welcome.

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MAY FIELD TRIP will be taken on Sunday, 13th inst., to Lafayette, Contra Costa County, where we always find more different species for the distance covered, than in any other area visited during the year. San Francisco members will take 8:00 a. m. Key Route Ferry and Sacramento Short Line (Oakland & Antioch) train at the mole. East Bay members may take train at College and Shafter Avenues, Oakland, at 8:35 a. m. Purchase round trip tickets to Lafayette; from San Francisco, $1.30; from Oakland, 95c. Bring lunch and drinking water. Leader, Mr. C. R. Thomas.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE APRIL MEETING: The seventy-fifth regular meeting of the Association was held on April 12th, in the Assembly Hall of the San Francisco Public Library, with President Kibbe in the chair; Mrs. Carl R. Smith, Secretary; fourteen members and guests in attendance.

The Secretary read a letter from an old friend and member, Mr. H. van Straaten, of Velp, Holland, advising of a gift from him of sixty stereoscopic photographs from life of song-birds and their nests, and asking their acceptance "as a little present from a far-away member." Upon motion of Mr. Bell, the Corresponding Secretary was requested to convey to Mr. van Straaten the thanks of the Association and its appreciation of his thoughtful kindness and remembrance. Older members will recall the fact that Mr. van Straaten was the first to present to us a census of the aquatic birds of Lake Merritt, taken by him in January, 1918, when he found 3,300 fowl, which number was reduced, on March 13th, to 668. This action resulted, finally, in the weekly census which was made during the season just past, from October 29th to May 2d, by five members of the Association and the Cooper Ornithological Club.

Major Allan Brooks, of Okanagan Landing, B. C., well-known bird artist and field naturalist, then entertained the meeting by outlining the development of bird depiction, with suggestions of the methods employed and results attained by various artists.

The oldest painting in the world is of a bird. From a tomb at Medum, Egypt, on the Middle Nile, a fragmentary fresco was taken to the Museum in Cairo. It is considered to date from a period three thousand years before the Christian era. In it are shown six geese, four of which are readily identifiable as examples of two species familiar to us to-day, *viz*, the white-fronted goose, of which a near relative is common in California and the beautiful rufous-necked goose which is found in Asia, but is not known in Africa except as indicated by this picture.

When considering bird portraiture in the more restricted modern sense, one is constrained to pass with little hesitation to the end of the eighteenth century. About 1520, Albrecht Dürer produced a picture of a dead duck which was notable for its great merit, and which was perhaps the first painting on paper, but the birds occurring in the paintings of other old masters were particularly bad and there was no further progress for a long time. Some three hundred years later, Thomas Bewick, the finest wood engraver of his time, executed beautiful pictures of birds, but they, too, were dead.

The year 1820 brought in lithographic processes, in which the pictures were printed in black and colored by hand, and men in France, England, Germany and America began to draw birds. Swinton made the best portraits up to 1840, but they were still stiff, stuffed, birds. Audobon, in 1827, relied upon the illustrations to finance his "Birds of America," and his method was very like that of his predecessors; he pinned a dead bird to a board and drew its picture.

The first portrayers of live birds were German, and between 1830 and 1840 were begun to be made real life studies of birds and small mammals Joseph Wolff, the son of a forester, was the greatest bird and animal portrayer of his time and, perhaps, of all time. He came to England and predominated the art in his time. Langier said that Wolff was as far ahead of him as he was of his predecessors of a hundred years before that time. Wolff must have studied from life. His birds are all alive, especially the *raptores*.

Perhaps the best English artist of this time was Mrs. Gould, who produced the illustrations for the earlier of the monumental works of John Gould.

Coming to the artists of the present day, Major Brooks referred to George Lodge as the finest example of man who can harmonize birds with their backgrounds. Lodge studied and painted live birds only. Archibald Thorburn works differently, making water color studies of birds in the field. There is a steady demand for his pictures which, lacking the strength and virility of Lodge's, are nevertheless beautiful. Millais, son of Millais and color blind, set himself to drawing birds. His black and white work is fine, but he has made no progress since he reached the age of thirty. His backgrounds are very elaborate, and are sometimes executed in advance. Winifred Austin produces little watercolors purely as pictures, but has gathered power and skill. A Danish artist, Gruenwald, is a master of detail, but never draws from life. He has formed a team with Howard, an exceptionally fine taxidermist, and has been successful in making copies of his mounted birds.

Fuertes works after the manner of Lodge. He never draws directly from life, but relies upon his wonderfully photographic eye. The pictures of Charles Knight, drawn from life, are good but he has not been so successful in drawing from dead birds.

Urged to give some idea of his own mode of procedure, Major Brooks emphasized the value of field study, observation and notes. Binoculars are an essential aid, but the camera is open to the objection that a photographed

bird is almost always an alarmed bird, and the resulting picture is liable to present an unnatural pose. True to his convictions, Major Brooks has spent much time in field study and has equipped himself with some 5,000 skins and copious notes. His pictures are characterized by subordination of the background into mere suggestion of appropriate habitat, with depiction of the subjects so thoroughly lifelike as to argue long familiarity with them on their home grounds under conditions which left them unsuspecting, unalarmed and natural.

The meeting expressed its thanks to Major Brooks and its appreciation of the treat afforded by his talk, which is quite inadequately outlined above.

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"SLAUGHTER SALE OF PARADISE FEATHERS— $180 HATS FOR $65"

The above advertisement appeared in New York papers last Fall, as a result of efforts by the National Association of Audobon Societies to secure the passage of a bill requiring the holders and wearers of feathers of wild birds to *prove that they had not been brought into the country illegally.*

A writer in the MANCHESTER GUARDIAN WEEKLY, March 16, 1923, makes the following appeal to women to abstain from encouraging the extirpation of birds whose only offense is their beauty, by flaunting on their persons these pitiful mementoes of torture and heartless slaughter for pay.

* * * Paradise plumes are very beautiful. When stimulated by excitement the great bird of paradise will raise the soft feathers of the flanks above its half-open wings and dance a quaint minuet along a branch. We may see it in spring dancing on the perches in the Zoological Gardens. One male bird would always dance when its friend the keeper rewarded it with mealworms! It was a never-to-be-forgotten sight to any lover of birds or admirer of the beautiful. Women who care more about artificial personal adornment than the beauty of nature may well pay a high price for these wonderful plumes: milliners and dealers, knowing the weakness of women, may well make them pay, and take risks to obtain the expensive article. * * *

There is a very simple way to stop all this and to save the lives of the tortured birds. The whole matter is in the hands of women. If they would refuse to wear the feathers of murdered innocents—feathers which have meant misery and death to more than the actual birds slain, for, with many species of birds, females are killed in the breeding season, and the unfortunate infants starve in the nest,—they would stop the trade. The dealer will not take the risk of importing articles that will not sell. But most women do not know and do not want to know. If they did allow themselves to realize what cruelty the feather trade involves they would be content to encourage the milliner's art in other and harmless directions. There are women who turn sick at the sight of a sparrow bleeding on the pavement, who faint if they see a cat killing a bird, but yet wear feathers in their hats. If only they would realize that they are causing far worse agonies to thousands and thousands of the birds they profess to admire they would surely hesitate. Fortunately, there are a few women who are bravely fighting the battle for the birds. It is largely owing to these women that the Plumage Bill is now law, and when they get a sufficient backing no law will be needed. But something must be done soon or there will be no birds of paradise and no egrets left.

T. A. C.

APRIL FIELD TRIP was taken on Sunday, the 15th, to Haywards Canyon, with an extension to Baumberg. The day was beautiful and particularly fine for walking. The canyon was traversed from the end of the car line to the upper end, where lunch was eaten, and the party returned to the highway along the ridge on the north side of the canyon.

The party separated about 2:30, a portion returning to Oakland, and the remainder visited the water birds at Baumberg, *via* Mt. Eden. These were fully rewarded by the doubling of the day's list at the Baumberg ponds, where they were greeted by the largest flock of avocets in the field history of the Association. These beautiful birds were absolutely unafraid, affording convincing testimony that the gunners had left them undisturbed. Not so with the ducks, however, for it was impossible to get anywhere near them. They flew up on the merest suspicion, informally, and without waiting for confirmation. By far the most numerous were the shovellers, there being but few of the three other species. The cliff swallows were swarming around, seeking building sites, with here and there a barn swallow.

The train having left before we arrived, return transportation presented something of a problem. Wearying of waiting for a stage, we started up the highway toward Mt. Eden and finally excited the compassion of a friendly truck driver, who carried us as far as San Lorenzo Junction. After a high school lunch of chocolate and colored soda water, the return trip was completed on the trolley.

Birds encountered at Haywards and Mt. Eden were: Red-tailed hawk, Anna hummer, nesting, and apparently a rufous hummer; western flycatcher, coast jay, Bullock oriole, meadowlark. Brewer blackbird, purple finch and linnet; green-backed goldfinch, Nuttall and chipping sparrows, junco and song sparrow; California towhee, black-headed grosbeak, shrike, warbling vireo, lutescent and pileolated warblers; Vigors wren, wren-tit and western bluebird. At Baumberg: Bonaparte gull, Forster tern, baldpate, shoveller, pintail and ruddy duck; great blue and black-crowned night herons, coot, avocet and Wilson snipe; dowitcher, sandpiper and sanderlings; yellow-legs, Hudsonian curlew, killdeer and mourning dove; marsh hawk, horned lark, bi-colored redwing, willow goldfinch, cliff and barn swallows, and tule wren. Forty-nine species in all.

Members present were: Mesdemoiselles Cheeseman, Fritts, Gunn, Paroni and Sterne; Mesdames Kibbe and Thomas; Messrs. Kibbe, Thomas and Webb. As guests: Mesdemoiselles Alfreda Berg, Edith Newton, A. Sherfey, and Pearl Shewman; Mrs. M. U. Hall; Messrs. I. M. Parry, Ananda Jacobs and Henri Eric Jacobs. Ten members and eight guests.

A. S. KIBBE.

AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

FOR THE STUDY AND THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

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Meets second Thursday of each month, at 8:00 p.m., in Assembly Hall of San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets.

Address Bulletin correspondence to President.

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